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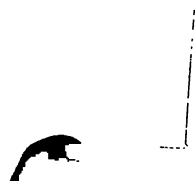
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KURRAGURTH AND THE OVERGROWN PLANTS.—*See p. 32.*

THE
"ENCHANTED WHEAT."
A TALE.

BY TWO AUTHORS,
MONA B. BICKERSTAFFE,
AND
S. B. P.



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The Enchanted Wheat.

A FAIRY TALE.

CHAPTER I.


FAR away in the West, off the coast of Ireland, is a little lonely Isle, so barren and rocky that it affords neither food nor shelter for the human race, so the wild sea-birds have it all to themselves, to rest and roost, and lay their eggs upon the bare ledges, and in the deep crevices of the rocky cliffs ; thus in the day-time the lonely isle is the scene of active life and noisy clamour, while at night, when the feathered tribe are all asleep, when not a sound is to be heard save the plashing of the waves upon the rocks below, then upon the grassy plain far above the heights, hosts of the

fairy folk are wont to assemble, and the silvery moonlight that glistens upon the dancing waves gives light to the fairy revels. Now these fairies of the rocky isle have certain time-honoured customs peculiarly their own, and these customs being well known to the fairy tribe in general, on certain high days the "good people" of the earth, together with the wee sprites of the sea and air, including all those of the main-land, wend their way with much ceremony to pay their homage to the Fairy Queen of the island. Of all the red-letter days in their calendar, none is so honoured by the fairies of the Isle as the birthday of their Queen ; for on that great day it is her especial pleasure, not indeed to receive gifts from her subjects, but to bestow favours upon them. According to this custom presents are prepared for all who may arrive ; but, before receiving them, each one is required to relate some service which he or she may have rendered to the Queen, and the fairy community in general, since their last meeting on her majesty's birthday, it being always understood that two special prizes shall be given to those two fairies

whose services are judged to be most valuable to her majesty. The fairies entitled to these prizes do not, like the others, receive any gift, but instead of that they are allowed to have the great privilege of asking their Queen for anything they desire to have, and she is bound by the laws of her realm to grant their request, whatever it may be. Now as it is considered a great honour to be the recipient of the special prizes, they are very eagerly contended for by all the fairy folk, who evince the greatest curiosity as to what may be chosen by the successful candidates on these occasions.

It was in the year—I can't say when—(seeing that fairy reckoning of time is to mortals somewhat puzzling) just at the season when our farmers have ploughed their fields and made everything ready to sow their corn, when the Queen of the rocky isle sent out invitations for the celebration of her birthday. Hosts of fairies assembled on this occasion. Some came trooping up from the earth, others on gauzy wings flying down through the air, while the water-fairies, dressed in shining robes of purple and rose and green, came

floating over the waves in little boats of pearly shell that were quite beautiful to see. Of course there was a great variety in such a very mixed assembly ; and among the lovely forms and sweet faces of the good fairies, many an ill-looking Leprehaun might be seen casting dark lowering glances round him. Among the latter none were more conspicuous than a wicked old fellow known in fairy-land as "Thinky-Winky." He had earned the first part of his name from his manner of always appearing to be wrapped in thought, though from the evil expression of his ugly little face, his thoughts could never have been good or pleasant; indeed, it was well known that the wicked old goblin had such a hatred to mankind, that he was always thinking how he might injure or annoy any of the human race. So much for the first part of his name. As for the latter, he was so called, because being blind of one eye, he had a trick of winking with the other in a manner that was quite frightful to behold. Well, there he was, hideous little elf, trying to force his way past everyone, so that he might reach the front rank of



the fairy throng, and by giving a pinch here, and a scratch there, now treading on some poor little fairy's toes, now cruelly nipping some other little fairy's elbows, he very soon succeeded in squeezing his way through them all, and obtaining a conspicuous position just before the Queen. I suppose her majesty was rather frightened at his appearance, for she started when she saw him so close to her, his wicked eye leering horribly, and his one long tooth shining like the tusk of a hungry wild beast whenever he made an attempt at smiling.

"Who is that?" said her majesty to her ladies in waiting; "how can such a malignant-looking monster have rendered good service to me or anyone else?"

Now, old Thinky-Winky had indeed served the Queen, though in doing so he was actuated not by any good motive, but rather with a view to further his own wicked devices,—for he rightly judged that if he could obtain a prize, and so be entitled to ask for anything he might wish for, he could do more injury to the human race than he had ever been able to do before.

He was one of the earth fairies, and chiefly resided underground ; so it happened that while travelling from one rabbit-hole to another, and trying to make his way out behind one of them, he fell down deep, deep into the centre of the earth. He was a little shaken at first, but soon recovered ; and while leaning on his stick thinking whether there was any chance of his finding a rabbit-hole to come out at on the other side of the globe, he heard a rumbling, growling, terrible noise. At first he was very much frightened, but presently, remembering where he was, he winked his wicked little eye, and chuckled to himself with the greatest glee—" Ha ! ha !" said he, " I know all about it ; the earth demons are holding a meeting, and perhaps if I listen, I may hear something that will help me to obtain the prize I covet from our island Queen."

So Thinky-Winky listened, and presently he heard the monarch of the earth-demons, in a voice that sounded like a peal of thunder, order them to forge an earthquake, wherewith to destroy the whole of the rocky isle ; for having heard of the beauty of the Fairy

Queen, he wanted to oblige her to come down to his own dark realms underground.

Old Thinky-Winky having heard what he wanted to hear, winked harder than ever with his solitary eye, and hastened away as fast as his crooked little limbs would take him, to tell the Queen of the threatened danger, and to advise her to leave the island as soon as possible. It was for this service that he claimed the first prize ; and though the Queen, frightened by the dreadful news, felt she ought to say something civil to the bearer, who came so quickly to warn her, still, he looked so hideous, and so malicious, as he stood before her grinning and winking, leering horribly the while, that she really could not speak to him ; so finding that no one praised him, he praised himself, and that so loudly, that one of the courtiers remarked sneeringly to another, that "the Leprehann's trumpeter must be dead," while another in the same tone expressed his opinion that "self-praise is no recommendation."

While the Queen and her ministers were debating as to the real value of Thinky-Winky's service, murmurs

were heard in the fairy throng, while a fairy herald, mounted on a beautiful blue dragon-fly, rode forward to announce that another candidate was coming to claim a prize.

Very sweet and lovely-looking was this new comer ; her long golden hair floated far over her gauzy wings, while the smiles that lit up her gentle countenance made sunshine wherever she went. She was an air-fairy, by name *Kurragurth ; and though she might have flown over all their heads, and lighted down wherever she pleased, she scorned to take advantage of those who were less gifted than she was, so she quietly waited while they (very willingly) made way for her to pass. The Queen looked very kindly on Kurragurth ; indeed, that gentle fairy was a great favorite with her majesty, for no unkind word, or unkind deed, had ever been reported of her ; on the contrary, the elves whose business it is to tell back all they hear, could only echo her favorite song,—“ Kind words can never die ! no, never die ! ”

* Or Swift Wing, from the Irish word signifying, to make haste.

At a signal from the Queen, Kurragurth came forward to state her claims:—"May it please your majesty," said she, "I was hovering in the air one sultry even, trying to keep off the gnats that were buzzing about a weary traveller who had fallen asleep upon the grass, when I saw old Thinky-Winky coming out of a rabbit-hole, talking to himself all the time. Of course I could not help hearing what he said, for the zephyrs brought it quite close to my ear, and I felt very much distressed when I learned all about the threatened danger to your majesty's dominions. Immediately I flew high up in the air, and consulted with all my kindred spirits as to what could be done to prevent so great a calamity. Fortunately our good friend, the Sun, heard of our anxiety, and kindly volunteered a whole army of his strongest beams to come to our assistance. They set to work early the next morning, drew up the dew-drops from the grass, stole some water from the rivers and lakes, and still more from the great blue ocean, and as it came up to us in the form of vapour, we gathered it all together, and after much labour managed to make a

huge nimbus or rain-cloud. Well, this cloud was so heavy that it could not remain long in the air, so it broke over the top of a mountain. Then down came the rain like a flood, swelling all the mountain springs, until bursting from their usual course they joined together in a mighty torrent that rushed down a hollow gorge, where huge stones lying in its course made it roar and foam with impatience, until escaping over a precipice it fell into a deep dark fathomless hole, whence was a passage to the very spot where the earth-demons were at work. Very much surprised were they when the water came roaring in, saturating the fireworks that were to make their earthquake, so that they were quite spoiled and could not go off! Nor was that all, for the spirits of the workmen were also so damped, they threw themselves on the ground in despair, and the torrent rolling over them, they every one were drowned. This, your gracious majesty, is all that I have done. But for Thinky-Winky's talking to himself I should not have known the intentions of the demons, so while he is entitled to the first prize, I venture to claim the second."

Murmurs of applause greeted Kurragurth at the conclusion of her modest speech; most of the fairy throng thought that she ought to have the first prize; but the Queen having consulted with the wisest of her ministers, came to the conclusion that as the services were equal, the prizes should be equal too, but that Thinky-Winky having first discovered the intended mischief, was entitled to the first choice; and added the Queen,—“As I have no power to dictate what he may choose, I can only hope that it will prove to be something very good and wise.”

“Come forward, Thinky-Winky, and state what you desire.”

Thus appealed to, the little Leprehaun shuffled forward to the foot of the throne; he had long before settled in his mind what his request should be, and now that he was going to have it, he leered and grinned and chuckled, his one eye winking more vehemently than ever.

“Ah, indeed,” said he, “’tis a very little thing that I desire of your majesty, a very little thing indeed; only just three little, little grains of enchanted wheat,—three

little grains yer majesty, which when planted, and ripened, and ground into flour, whoever eats of that flour may be endowed with selfishness from the first grain; idleness from the second; and deceit from the third. You'd like me to ask for something greater I know, but that is all I want; such a very trifling request yer majesty." And Thinky-Winky, ogling first at the Queen, and then at the assembly round him, twisted and writhed and shewed his great tooth in a perfect ecstasy of delight.

The whole fairy throng while listening to the Leprehaun's speech, had kept a solemn silence, but now murmurs of angry disapproval were heard on all sides, while the good little Queen, bursting into tears, exclaimed, "Oh you wicked old Thinky-Winky, you have spoiled all my birthday joy; I wish I might refuse you your request, but that is out of my power, so you may go to my granaries and take your three grains of wheat; they shall be enchanted as you desire, but remember cruel little Goblin, that ill deeds always recoil on those who commit them; now begone, and let me never see

you in my dominions again." Then turning to Kurragurth, in a low sad voice, the Queen asked what she desired to have.

"May it please your majesty," said the lovely little fairy, as closing her gossamer veil around her, she bowed gracefully before the throne,—“I only care to have something that will effectually counteract Thinky-Winky's wicked work.”

For a moment the Queen's face brightened, but soon she wept again,—“Ah me,” said she, “how gladly would I grant your request, sweet Kurragurth, but alas! it is quite out of my power. Those enchanted grains, when they have once taken root, cannot change their nature, unless they be watered with human tears, shed in the cause of those very virtues which they are intended to destroy. If indeed you can manage to collect tears from the eyes of generous, diligent, truthful mortals, in the three magic bottles that I can give you, if you can manage to water the enchanted seed with them, it will, even after it has sprung up, wholly change its nature, and lose its evil properties. This would not

be so difficult to accomplish if you can only find out where Thinky-Winky sows it, but that I fear will be quite impossible. Kurragurth smiling, said that "Where there's a will, there's always a way;" things are not so impossible if we are persevering, and patient, and do our best; moreover, said she, "I have many friends, so I do not despair either of collecting the tears, or finding the wheat." Then with another graceful inclination to the Queen, who, bending forward, with her own royal hands fastened the three magic bottles in a rainbow girdle round the gentle fairy, Kurragurth spread out her beautiful wings and flew away, over the rocky isle, over the sea, and never rested, until she had travelled far over the mainland too.



CHAPTER II.

WHEN Kurragurth had travelled some distance over the mainland, she came to a great and busy town. Then she paused, "for" said she to herself, "poor humanity is crowded here; in this great city, there is much human sin, and human sorrow, so human tears are sure to abound." Then the pretty fairy floating down from the clear air above, hovered over the smoky streets, until at last she came near the windows of a house. "Hark!" said she, "what is that? surely it is a sound of weeping—human tears are certainly falling there—yes, truly, there is a little boy in much pain and trouble, I must go in, and hear what he says."

"Oh! oh! oh!" sobs the child, "what shall I do, what shall I ever do! Oh! I feel so bad—'tis the tarts, or the cheese-cakes, or the almond sweets, or the rich

cake. I might as well have given some to the other boys, eating so much has made me ill, Oh! oh."

"Ah," said Kurragurth, "those are naughty tears; that little boy is not sorry for his greediness, he only weeps over its consequences; such tears as his will not do for me." So the bottle was put back into her girdle, and with a sigh, the gentle fairy flew away. Next she came to a school.

Buz, buz, buz,—the little human bees were busy picking up the honey of knowledge, to help them on in their after lives; but louder than the buzzing, comes the sound of sobs; a naughty idle boy is standing on a chair, making such ugly faces as he cries with all his might; his tears are not in sorrow for his fault, he only cries in anger, because he has been punished, he wishes there was not a lesson book in the world, he wishes he might play all the day long. His tears would not do for Kurragurth, and the fairy sighing, again turned away, and was about to fly off, when her eye rested on two large pearly drops that were silently trickling down the cheeks of a dear little girl. In a moment Kurragurth

was by her side, and putting her head close against the little throbbing heart, she heard all the gentle child's kind and tender thoughts. She was weeping for Willy, her dear but idle little brother, who was so continually in disgrace because he would not learn his lessons. Very often had Lucy tried to teach him, and now she determined that instead of going boating that afternoon as she had intended, she would ask leave to be allowed to stay in school and help her little brother. Her tears were not shed for herself, they were not for the loss of her afternoon's amusement, but for sorrow at her little brother's disgrace and punishment. Yes, those were the sort of tears for Kurragurth; quick as lightning she drew the cork from one of her tiny bottles, and catching two round drops as they fell from the eyes of the unselfish child, she corked them up safely, and away she flew through the open window. She had now to seek for tears of industry, and very soon she found them. In a miserable attic of that great town, a poor woman was lying on her bed quite crippled with rheumatism. Around her was her young family, each one, down to a

child of four years old hard at work, while the poor mother wept silently, as she looked on at their labours. Her tears were not for the pain she suffered ; no, she only wept because though very willing to work for them all, she was quite unable to do anything, and so felt herself a burthen instead of a help to her dear ones. Kurragurth rightly judged that in her case, the will might be taken for the deed, so she caught the poor mother's falling tears to preserve them in her second bottle as the tears of industry.

It now only remained for the fairy to procure tears shed for truth.

Those were more difficult to find ; often she thought she had found them, but ere the cork was drawn from her bottle, she discovered they were not the tears she sought for. Time was getting on ; Thinky-Winky's wheat would be springing up, and Kurragurth was beginning to feel anxious, when one day as she hovered over a street and passed close to a large corner house, she thought she heard sounds that made her linger awhile to listen. Yes, there was some one crying very

much in one of the upper bedrooms; and flying in at the window, our fairy saw a little boy standing at his father's knee. The child was evidently in great distress, weeping bitterly, as he confessed that he had disobeyed his parent's orders, and though no one would have known what he had done, the little fellow could not rest until he had told all to his father. His falling tears, as tears of truth, were quickly caught by Kurragurth, and the good little fairy delighted at having so far succeeded in her mission, on glad wings flew away.



CHAPTER III.

WE have followed our gentle fairy, sweet Kurragurth, while she collected the prescribed quantity of human tears ; this done, the most difficult part of her duty was yet to come—for she had to find out the exact spot where Thinky-Winky had planted the enchanted wheat. None of the other fairies knew anything about it, he was far too cunning to allow any of them to watch his movements ; and ever since Kurragurth had overheard him, he was very cautious not to talk aloud to himself. It was well for the good little fairy that she had by her kind acts won many friends. The flowers all loved her dearly, for many a time when fading and drooping she had bathed them in refreshing dew ; but of all her floral friends, the sweet violet was the most loving and beloved ; and now, in her anxiety, Kurragurth determined to go and consult with her as to where she might find the enchanted wheat.

It was not very difficult to find “the home of the violet blue,” for even in retirement the sweet lowly flower shed a fragrance round her, and Kurragurth, led by the scented breeze, was soon at the spot, where she found her dear friend coyly hiding behind her broad green leaves. Now I daresay our little friends will wonder why the fairy was so much fonder of the violet than of all the other flowers, so to explain this, we must turn to the fairy chronicles, and there we may read the following history :—

THE FAIRY AND THE VIOLET.

“The bright sun shone o’er a rich parterre
And the breeze came laden with perfumes rare,
When a fairy gay in that evening hour
Roam’d sportive about from flower to flower ;
‘Rose,’ said that fairy, in joyous fun,
‘Should the dark clouds gather o’er yon bright sun,
‘And the cold winds whistle loud and shrill,
‘Rose, will you love and shelter me still ?’
‘Can you doubt me?’ in anger the sweet rose said,
And her soft leaves were dyed a deeper red.

"The fairy flew through the rich parterre,
 And sought for dear friend, a lily fair ;
 'Lily,' said she, in her joyous fun,
 'Should the dark clouds gather o'er yon bright sun,
 'And the cold winds whistle loud and shrill,
 'Oh ! say, sweet flower, will you love me still ?'
 'Do you think I could change,' said the lily fair ?
 And her cheek grew pale, for grief was there.

"Still the fairy went on her gladsome way,
 And sought 'mid the flowers a tulip gay ;
 'Kind flower,' said she, in her joyous fun,
 'Should the dark clouds gather o'er yon bright sun,
 'Should the cold winds whistle loud and shrill,
 'Kind flower, oh ! say will you love me still ?'
 Then the tulip bent down his gorgeous head,
 'Who ever has doubted my word ?' he said.

"Then happy away the bright fairy flew,
 And sought 'mong the flowers the violet blue ;
 'Sweet flower,' said she, in her joyous fun,
 'Should the dark clouds gather o'er yon bright sun,
 'Should the cold winds whistle loud and shrill,
 'Sweet flower, oh ! say, will you love me still ?'
 And the violet said, 'We were friends in youth,
 'Should you e'er have occasion, try my truth.'

"Then away through the parterre the fairy flew,
 But soon the rain fell, and the cold winds blew ;
 Then she said to the rose, 'Oh, to you I've run,
 'For the dark clouds have gathered o'er yon bright sun,
 'And the cold winds whistle loud and shrill,
 'But you've promised to love and shelter me still';
 'Ah! I fear that I cannot,' replied the rose,
 'I must shelter my buds from the wind that blows.'

"Still on through the parterre the fairy went,
 And her steps to the lily in hope she bent ;
 'Sweet flower,' said she, 'now to you I've run,
 'For the dark clouds have gathered o'er yon bright sun,
 'And the cold winds whistle loud and shrill,
 'But you've promised to love and shelter me still';
 'I can't open my flowers,' said the lily fair,
 'For I fear lest the rain-drops should enter there.'

"Then on went the fairy through cold and wet,
 Still she thought that the tulip would shelter her yet ;
 'Kind flower,' said she, 'now to you I've run,
 'For the dark clouds have gathered o'er yon bright sun,
 'And the cold winds whistle loud and shrill,
 'But you've promised to love and shelter me still';
 'Begone,' said the tulip, 'twould indeed be queer,
 'If I shelter'd each stranger that sought me here.'

"Then the fairy thought she had one friend yet—
 And weeping, she sought the blue violet,
 And the sweet little flower, with her soft bright eye,
 Sees the poor fairy in tears draw nigh ;
 Then in silence she opens her shelt'ring leaves,
 And the fairy all wet to her heart receives,
 And spreads out her broad leaves to give her heat,
 And breathes all about her a perfume sweet,
 And covers her well from the piercing blast,
 'Till the rain has ceas'd and the storm has past.

"Then the lowly flower to the fairy spake,
 'Fairy,' said she, 'it is bad to make
 'Friends of the many, one heart is quite
 'Enough for earth's daughters, or fairy sprite.'
 So the fairy believed in the violet blue,
 She knew that her precepts and words were true,
 And constant remained from that happy hour,
 To the lasting love of the lowly flower ;
 And from that day the fairies all love to go
 To the sunny bank where the violets blow."

Now you will not wonder that our gentle Kurragurth
 should love and trust the violet more than all the other
 flowers, and that she should hasten away to the bank

where she was to be found. Yes, there she was, half-hidden by her broad green leaves, but when she peeped out and saw her visitor, she looked quite delighted.

“ Ah ! dear Kurragurth ! ” said she, “ I am so very glad to see you, especially so just now, for I have had such a fright.”

“ A fright ! ” exclaimed Kurragurth, “ Who has dared to frighten my sweet friend ? ”

“ No one intentionally, I believe ; but I will tell you all about it : I was enjoying the sunshine a few days ago, when I heard a sound as if something was scrambling in and out of that rabbit-hole close by ; and just as I was wondering what it could be, my curtain of leaves was rudely pushed aside, and I saw the most hideous object staring me in the face. I do not know whether I can describe him, for I hid my head directly, and scarcely ventured to look again ; but hearing him chuckling and laughing in the queerest way, I took courage to peep through a hole in a leaf, and there I saw him, twisting and writhing, and clapping his lean little hands. He had only one eye, and kept winking

all the time with the other ; while one long tusk projecting from his mouth, made him look like a beast of prey. I suppose he was tired, for he sat down just where you are, and while he appeared to be half asleep he talked all the while to himself."

"Ah, I know him so well," said Kurragurth; "the most mischievous little goblin anywhere. Go on, dear Violet, I am so anxious to hear what he said."

"Well, after rolling himself about as if transported with delight, he sat still leaning on his stick. 'Ha! ha!' said he, 'spite of her majesty, and spite of Kurragurth, I think I have done it now. The enchanted wheat is pretty safe in the ground; the seeds of idleness, selfishness, and deceit, have by this time taken deep root, and wont they bear fruit by and by! Dear, dear, what a crop I shall have! What fun I shall have! When Farmer Keily sees such fine wheat he will be sure to keep it for seed, and then it will spread its influence from Knockalahara all over the country—and perhaps over the world—so working endless mischief among that hateful human race. The Queen of

the rocky isle will cry her eyes out when she learns the effect of her birthday prize ; Kurragurth will grieve too, for all her kind deeds will go for nothing when once the enchanted wheat is ground into flour. Oh ! 'tis splendid ! 'tis delightful !' and the dreadful little Leprehaun, quite wild with wicked glee, turned head over heels, and rolled away, far away out of my sight. That is all I have to tell you, dear Kurragurth ; it does not seem much to speak about, but I was so frightened at the time that even now I cannot forget it."

: "Sweet Violet," said Kurragurth, her face quite glowing with pleasure, "you cannot think how much I am interested in what you have just related. I have been wandering in all directions, trying to find the spot where that wicked old Thinky-Winky planted his enchanted wheat, and I even came here seeking you, to ask if you could tell me anything about it. Oh, I am so glad ! I shall go at once to Knockalahara, and see if I cannot spoil the Leprehaun's wicked game. Adieu now, dear Violet, I must not linger here ; but I shall send some of my relations to fan you with the

softest zephyrs, and bathe you in the sweetest dew"; then, with a parting kiss to her fair floral friend, the fairy on kindest thoughts intent, flew away to Knockalahara.

Farmer Keily's fields looked very flourishing, and Kurragurth hovered over them for some time in doubt, "for," said she, "it would be so dreadful if I were to make any mistake, that I must be quite sure that I find the right plants. There! I do believe I see them now; that patch in the corner is much greener, finer, and more advanced in every way, than the rest of the corn; 'ill weeds grow apace,' so that must surely be the enchanted wheat. It might be as well to pull it up altogether, but I had better obey the orders of my Queen"; then Kurragurth, taking the three magic bottles from her girdle, emptied their contents very carefully round the roots of the overgrown plants, smiling so brightly as she did so, that a little pimpernel growing near unfolded his scarlet flowers, for he thought that the sun was shining. Her mission ended, the fairy soared aloft on joyous wing, over the

land, over the sea, until she reached the rocky isle, when she hastened to tell the Queen of her success. Her majesty was delighted you may be sure, and immediately gave orders to the echo elves that they should carefully watch, and send telegrams through the air reporting all that might happen.



CHAPTER IV.

HAVING made the necessary report at the rocky isle, the Queen would not allow Kurragurth to go again until she had given her some token of her approbation. This consisted of a pair of magic ear-rings, which would enable her, when flying high in the air, to hear all that was said by the human race in their busy world below ; and no sooner had she put them into her ears, than she • begged leave to fly away to Knockalahara that she might learn the effect of her labours. A wonderful change had taken place in the enchanted wheat ; indeed, if Kurragurth had not been a fairy, she could never have found it, for no longer towering above the rest, it had shrank back to its natural size, and though it looked quite strong and healthy, there was nothing remarkable in its appearance.

“ Ah ! ” said Kurragurth, “ I am so glad, it is no

longer an overgrown ill weed, but a plant that will be useful and profitable to mankind. I may allow it to take its own course now, but I shall not cease to watch over it. I think all the corn looks rather dry, and would be much refreshed by a little rain."

Thus saying, rising like a lark she soared up in the air, and calling her companion air fairies (who were delighted to see her among them again) she begged them to assist her in making a rain-cloud, and when they had finished they discharged its contents in very soft gentle rain over the land below. Delicious rain it was, and Farmer Keily was so glad to see it that he walked out without his hat, quite forgetting that though very good for his corn and turnips, it might not be quite so good for him. I cannot say how long he might have remained looking over the gate into his wheat field, had he not been aroused from his admiration of the falling shower by his wife's voice, sharply asking whether he wanted to have "another bout of the rheumatiz."

Well, the rain fell softly, and the corn grew, first the

blade and then the ear, and the sun smiling upon it changed its colour from bright green to yellow green, and finally to a golden hue, that shewed it to be ripe and ready for the harvest. While this was going on our fairy watched and waited ; she wished to tell her kind floral friend of all that had happened, but when she flew to the bank the violet was no longer there, and though she looked well among a few green leaves that still remained, no trace of her friend could she find.

“ Very strange,” said she, “ I fear it must be Thinky-Winky’s work,” and bursting into tears the fairy was slowly going away, when a little chirping voice called to her to stop, and looking round she saw a bright little eye peeping at her through the neighbouring hedge. “ Ah, Mr. Robin,” said the fairy, “ I am very glad to see you, perhaps you can tell me what has become of my sweet floral friend, Blue Violet ? ”

“ Yes, fairy,” said the robin, “ I can, and that is why I attracted your attention just now. Flowers, you know, are not immortal, they live their allotted time and then they wither away and die. This is what has

happened to your sweet friend, only she did not die upon her native bank ; she was too sweet to die unnoticed, and some while ago I saw her taken away by a little human child, who had come to gather flowers for some sick relative. By this time the violet is faded and dead, but if you go to a certain house in yonder city, you will see that she has left the fragrance of sweet memories behind."

"Thank you," said the fairy, "you are very kind to tell me all this, and I shall go to the city directly."

So Kurragurth flew away to the city, for she quite longed to re-visit the spots where she had been before. There the first person she saw was the little boy who had over-eaten himself. Instead of being the fat chubby little child he was before, he had become very thin and pale, for his greediness had brought on a fever, from the effects of which he was still suffering. Kurragurth looking in saw him lying on a sofa, turning over the contents of a little writing desk. Beside him was his cousin Lucy, the very same unselfish child with whose tears the fairy had watered the seed of sel-

fishness. The children were talking as they looked over their treasures—birthday cards, cards of Christmas greeting, and other pretty things. Presently they opened an envelope, and our fairy peeping in could see that it was full of small pale flowers, faded and withered, but sweetly fragrant still, and among them she saw her friend the violet. “I shall keep these always,” said the boy, “not only for your dear sake, but to remind me of the illness that I brought on myself—a very bad illness in some things, a very good illness in others.” Then the boy smiled sweetly as he looked at his cousin, and there were tears in his large thoughtful eyes. Kurragürth felt happy as she flew away to linger awhile over the home of the poor mother who had shed the tears of industry.

Poor woman ! her place like the violet’s was deserted, and she was no longer there, but transplanted to a happier clime ; but she, too, had left sweet memories behind in the hearts of her loving children, who were trying to work hard and do their best, because “mother would always have it so.”

Again Kurragurth turned, smiling, away; but as she flew along over the busy town her fair brow was often clouded with sorrow, for she heard many harsh cruel words, and saw many unkind deeds, and very glad was she to escape from the smoke and din of busy humanity to the fields where the corn grew.



CHAPTER V.

It was harvest time ; the yellow grain was fully ripe, and Farmer Keily was busy among his reapers, when creeping out of a mole-hill came old Thinky-Winky, all anxiety to see how his enchanted wheat had flourished. Very much disappointed was he to perceive that, to his thinking, it had not flourished at all, for he could see no difference between it and the rest of the corn.

Kurragurth also came hovering over the field, a little anxiously at first, but she felt quite satisfied when she saw that though the plants were no larger than the others, the ear of wheat upon each of them was remarkably fine and full of grain, so ripe and golden, not a speck of smut or mildew to be seen. Soon the reapers came on, all in a row, keeping time with every

stroke, and the enchanted wheat with all the rest fell before the sickle. Old Thinky-Winky could not keep away, and so engrossed was he in cogitating over all the evil he hoped to accomplish, that he did not take care of himself, and only awoke from his reverie to feel a sharp pain as the reapers cut him in two and crushed him under their feet, thinking, no doubt, that the red spot they left on the ground was only a scarlet poppy, which, as every one knows, is often to be seen among corn.

Now I must tell you, that though the nature of the enchanted wheat was changed, it was enchanted still. The grains when threshed were bound to keep together, and when ground into flour each white dusty particle would adhere to its fellow, so that whoever eat of one would have to eat of all, and it was the same too with the stalks, even after they were separated from the grain, and made up into a huge rick of straw.

Well, in due time the corn went to the market, and of course the enchanted wheat went with the rest. Now I must tell you, that in the country was a certain

millers whose name was Joe—a very dusty miller, and a very merry miller too was he ; but being also a very sly fellow, he was not at all a safe man with whom to make a bargain, for while over-praising the goods he wanted to sell, he always found fault with anything he wanted to buy, declaring it was not worth half the price set upon it ; so he would go on, trying to beat it down lower and lower, until, I believe, if the seller was to offer to let him have it for nothing, he would still try and bargain further by saying, “ Very well, but what will you give me if I take it ? ” Now this Joe Miller, or Joe the miller, coming to market to buy some corn, took up one of the enchanted grains, and biting it in two he perceived how white it was ; then nibbling at it he swallowed it all, and thought it tasted very sweet and good.

“ I’ll have the whole of that lot,” said he.

“ Very good,” said Farmer Keily, putting his hands deep down into his pockets, and stiffening himself up in the expectation of having to defend himself in a very hard bargain with his customer. To his great surprise

there was no attempt at a bargain ; the farmer was an honest man, and named a fair price, that price was immediately paid ; Joe Miller took away his wheat, had it ground in his mill, and when he sold his flour he only asked a moderate sum, according to the proper market value. It was the same in all his dealings. Everyone was wondering what had come over the miller. Some hoped it would last, others shook their heads, and feared he could not be long for this world ; but while everyone was puzzled, Kurragurth knew all about it, for she knew that he had swallowed half-a-grain of the enchanted wheat, when he tasted to see if the corn was good—but I am wandering a little from my story. The wheat, as I told you, went to the mill, and when it came back to market in the form of flour, it looked so good and smelt so sweet, that Mrs. Siddles, a confectioner, who thought herself a very fair judge of what flour ought to be, immediately bought a sack of it, which sack happened to be the very one that contained all the enchanted grains.

Mrs. Siddles had a very large shop, and a very large

consumption, for she laughed as she put up the sweets. "The second half-pound this week, sir."

"Well, never mind," and the old gentleman laughed too; "now for the ginger-bread nuts," said he.

Then Mrs. Siddles took the glass jar from the window, and into her scales fell all the nuts that were made from the enchanted wheat. They were made up in paper, just fifty in the pound, and the old gentleman put the parcel in his pocket and went away. Presently he came to a school. He always walked slowly past that school-gate, and often looked in to have a word with the children. There they were, all at high play; but when they saw their kind old friend, they ran to meet him, clinging about him just like a swarm of bees. Then down went his hands into his pockets. "Now for a scramble!" said he, and the whole pound of ginger-bread went flying through the air, falling in a pleasant spicy shower among the merry children. Soon you might have heard such exclamations as—"I have one!" "I have two!" "Oh! I have not any!" Then, if your hearing was very quick indeed, it would

have caught a soft buzzing sound very high up in the air, for there was Kurragurth flapping her gauzy wings, delighted to see that the seeds of industry, unselfishness, and truth, had found their way among so many young people. Even touching the charmed nuts seemed to produce a good effect, for any boy or girl who had secured two, immediately shared with some one who had none ; but when they were all eaten, it was quite wonderful to see the changes they produced. Of course we cannot tell you about all of them, but we may just notice two or three.

There was little Mary Desmond, whose mother was a widow and in very delicate health. Mrs. D. had some sheets to make, and she had asked her little daughter to hasten home after school, so that she might help her a little ; but Mary hated sewing, and she made up her mind that she would not stay indoors at work all that fine afternoon, but would go for a walk with her cousin Alice instead. When Mary had eaten of the enchanted grain she began to feel quite differently. She thought to herself, " Poor mother is

weak and ailing, I am young and strong"; and Kurragurth, passing by her cottage that afternoon, saw Mary sitting at her work, looking quite happy, and singing all the time. It was a pleasant sight for our good little fairy, and pleasanter still when the large sheet finished, Mary folded it up quite neatly, and her mother, kissing her, said, "Dear child, you have been a real help and comfort to me to-day."

But to return to the school. There was little Annie Fieldwick, who was always in trouble about her arithmetic, always vexed and puzzled and out of patience when obliged to do a sum. Now Annie had eaten of the enchanted grain; and when the children went into school again, instead of looking sulky and stupid over her slate, she set to work with a will, gave all her attention to what she was doing, and very soon the sum, though more difficult than usual, was finished, proved to be quite correct, and Annie went home with a light heart to tell her father that at last she had conquered the arithmetic, and it should never conquer her again.

Then there was little Lilian. Her great trouble was her writing—such wayward writing it was ; it cost her many a sigh and many a tear too ; for the long letters always looked as if they could not stand up, and the short letters were as crooked as letters could be. Her “i’s” had no dots, and her “t’s” were never crossed, for instead of crossing her “t’s” she was apt to be cross herself, then she cried, and the falling tears made great blots that spoiled her copy altogether. Her teacher knew that Lilian could do better if she tried, but Lilian never really tried in earnest, so her copy-book was quite a disgrace. But now she had eaten of the enchanted wheat and enchanting nuts, and behold, what a change ! She no longer held her pen as if her fingers had the cramp ; there were no more blots and no more crooked letters ; and when her teacher looked at the nice clean page, with the “i’s” neatly dotted and the “t’s” carefully crossed, she smiled, and said, “See what it is to try dear child, you have taken pains to-day, and have produced quite a creditable copy.”

Now it so happened that on the very day upon which

the old gentleman gave the scramble for ginger-bread nuts, two little boys had planned together that they would get over their spelling lesson without taking the trouble of learning it. Their intention was to help each other by spelling out the words by the finger alphabet upon their naughty little fingers. But when the afternoon school opened, their feelings had undergone a change. They had each eaten a portion of the enchanted grain, so one whispered to the other, "Tommy, I don't think it will be an honest thing to do."

"No," said Tommy, "and as we have not learned the lesson, we had better tell teacher all about it."

They did so ; and though they were punished by having to stay in after school to learn the lesson, still they knew by the expression of their kind teacher's eye when she talked to them about it, that she was glad they had not been guilty of a deceitful act, but had found courage both to resist temptation, and to confess their fault. So in the school-room the enchanted wheat produced the fruits of industry and

truth, while in the play-ground all was harmony and love. Each child willing to give up to another, to share his or her pleasure with the others, and as those children grow into men and women, we hope the enchanted wheat through them will spread its influence far and wide.



CHAPTER VI.

KURRAGURTH, you may be sure, was rejoiced to see the fruits of her labours, and only regretted that she could not tell her sweet friend the blue violet of all that had happened; but she returned to the rocky isle, and told the Queen, who received with great favour, and bestowed high honours upon her faithful subject. So time went on, and again the happy time came round when the Queen of the rocky isle was to celebrate her birth-day. It was to be an occasion of unusual splendour, and the fairies of the water, the earth, and the air, came flocking in myriads to the spot. It was a very grand sight I assure you. The little gentlemen mounted on dragon-flies of red, blue and green, and the ladies upon lovely butterflies that dazzled the eye with their gorgeous colours. Ah, it was a grand display,

and a very merry meeting too; even the ugly little Leprehauns that rode in upon grass-hoppers, looked more amiable as they had not Thinky-Winky to set them on to mischief. Kurragurth and her attendant air-spirits went home in state upon a balmy zephyr, while the waves glittering in the moonlight seemed as if studded with gems from the number of fairy boats that floated upon them.

Very, very beautiful was the Queen of the rocky isle, very happy too she looked, though her fair brow was now and then shaded, and there was a tinge of sadness in her sweet smile of welcome, for as her majesty was going to be married, she must, according to the laws of fairy-land, resign her crown, and retire into private life; and as good Queen Modtheen loved her subjects, she was really quite sorry to take leave of them. Well, the Queen was escorted to her throne by a band of fairy minstrels playing upon trumpets of sweet honey-suckle; and as they passed along, the delicate blue bells chimed in with a merry chorus, while the heather bells tinkled a joyous accompaniment, waking up the sleeping

daisies until they unclosing their golden eyes, laughed gaily as the fairy throng went by. On this occasion two thrones occupied the centre of the green sward; to one of them the trumpeters ushered the old Queen, while the other was left vacant for her successor. Then the Queen's suitor came forward to claim her hand, was accepted, and taking his place beside her 'neath a canopy of burnished green beetle wings, he proceeded to declare her resignation of the crown, and added in her behalf a request that the courtiers, ministers and assembly in general would allow her to guide them in the choice of a successor. As the fairy prince spoke, all eyes turned to Kurragurth, for very well they knew that the Queen thought of her, and they heartily agreed to her wishes. There were no dissenting voices, so the gentle Kurragurth was duly elected to be Fairy Queen of the rocky isle, and if you ever happen to meet with the chronicles of fairy-land, you may read therein of how wise and good a Queen she proved to be, reigning not only in the rocky-isle, but upon the mainland too, where she had a palace high up in the elm tree at

the end of a certain play-ground, from whence she could watch the children at their play, and was always so glad when she heard that they were industrious, truthful, and kind, for then she knew that they would live to be useful, and good, and great, and so in their after lives, be happy means of still further disseminating the blessed effects of "The enchanted wheat."



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